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S E C R E T BOGOTA 000286

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SUBJECT: MASS GRAVE SITE DISCOVERED IN CAQUETA

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON. REASON 1.5 (B)
AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT OF THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE IS INVESTIGATING THE DISCOVERY OF WHAT ARE BELIEVED TO BE THE GRAVES OF OVER 100 VICTIMS OF PARAMILITARY ATROCITIES IN CAQUETA DEPARTMENT. THE VICTIMS ARE BELIEVED TO BE ALLEGED FARC SYMPATHIZERS WHO WERE TORTURED AND EXECUTED BETWEEN ONE AND TWO YEARS AGO. TWO PARAMILITARIES SUSPECTED OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CRIMES ARE IN CUSTODY, AND AN ARREST WARRANT IS OUTSTANDING FOR A THIRD. POLOFF AND DOJ REPRESENTATIVES WILL MEET WITH THE LEAD INVESTIGATOR IN THE CASEIN NEIVA ON JANUARY 16. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) ON JANUARY 7, OFFICIALS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT OF THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE (FISCALIA) TOLD EMBOFFS THAT INTELLIGENCE GATHERED BY ITS CORPS OF TECHNICAL INVESTIGATORS (CTI) HAD LED TO THE DISCOVERY OF AT LEAST 36 SHALLOW GRAVES NEAR THE VILLAGE OF PUERTO TORRES, IN SOUTHWESTERN CAQUETA DEPARTMENT. A TEAM OF FORENSIC INVESTIGATORS AND PROSECUTORS SPENT TWO WEEKS EXHUMING BODIES AND STUDYING THE SITE, LOCATED IN ONE OF THE FEW AREAS OF CAQUETA CONTROLLED BY PARAMILITARIES. COLOMBIAN MEDIA HAVE SINCE REPORTED THE EXISTENCE OF THE GRAVE SITE AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF PARAMILITARY INVOLVEMENT, BUT THEY SEEMINGLY HAVE NO DETAILS.

13. (C) THE INVESTIGATION IS BEING DIRECTED BY THE NEIVA BRANCH OF THE FISCALIA'S NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS UNITS, A SATELLITE OFFICE ESTABLISHED WITH USG FUNDS. USG MONEY ALSO PURCHASED MUCH OF THE EQUIPMENT USED IN THE EXHUMATIONS AND FORENSIC ANALYSES CONDUCTED SO FAR. (COMMENT: THIS IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE HIGH-PROFILE INVESTIGATIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF DIRECTOR ELBA BEATRIZ SILVA. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) THE EMBASSY'S LONG-STANDING, COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT ALLOWED POST TO RECEIVE A PRELIMINARY WRITTEN REPORT ON THE CASE, ACCOMPANIED BY PHOTOGRAPHS DOCUMENTING THE ON-SITE EXHUMATIONS. THE DETAILS OF THE INVESTIGATION REMAIN HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL AND HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC FOR FEAR OF COMPROMISING INVESTIGATIVE LEADS.

15. (S) ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT'S REPORT, IN OCTOBER CONFESSED PARAMILITARY EFREN MARTINEZ INFORMED AGENTS OF THE FISCALIA'S CORPS OF TECHNICAL INVESTIGATORS (CTI) OF THE EXISTENCE OF AN IMPROVISED GRAVEYARD IN SOUTHWESTERN CAQUETA WHERE THE BODIES OF MORE THAN 100 PARAMILITARY VICTIMS WERE BURIED. BASED ON MARTINEZ'S CONFESSION, ON OCTOBER 16 A GROUP OF 25 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE SPECIALISTS AND PROSECUTORS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY CONVERGED ON THE SMALL VILLAGE OF PUERTO TORRES, MUNICIPALITY OF BELEN DE LOS ANDAQUIES. ONE HUNDRED RANDOM TEST PITS EXCAVATED AT THE SITE REVEALED 36 BODIES, 33 MEN AND THREE WOMEN, IN VARIED STAGES OF ADVANCED DECOMPOSITION. AUTHORITIES ESTIMATE THAT THE VICTIMS WERE KILLED BETWEEN ONE AND TWO YEARS AGO. THE LIMBS OF MOST WERE BOUND WITH BALING WIRE, MOST HAD BEEN DECAPITATED AND DISMEMBERED, AND MANY SHOWED SIGNS OF PROLONGED TORTURE. LOGS AND TREES, SCARRED WITH BULLET HOLES AND DEEP MACHETE MARKS, WERE CLEARLY SITES OF MULTIPLE EXECUTIONS. INVESTIGATORS REMAINED AT THE SITE UNTIL OCTOBER

30, WHEN A PRECARIOUS SECURITY SITUATION FORCED THEIR PREMATURE DEPARTURE.

¶6. (S) CONFESSED PARAMILITARY MARTINEZ AND FORMER ARMY CAPTAIN EVERARDO BOLANOS, ALLEGEDLY SECOND-IN-COMMAND OF THE REGIONAL PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION, ARE IN CUSTODY UNDER PRE-TRIAL DETENTION ORDERS LINKING THEM TO THE CRIMES. AN ARREST WARRANT ISSUED ON NOVEMBER 19 IS OUTSTANDING FOR FORMER ARMY SERGEANT NEVARDO ANTONIO MILLAN, THE ALLEGED COMMANDER OF THE CAQUETA PARAMILITARIES APPARENTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE ATROCITIES.

¶7. (C) RATHER THAN VICTIMS OF A SINGLE MASSACRE, THE DEAD ARE PRESUMED TO BE ALLEGED FARC SUPPORTERS WHO DISAPPEARED INDIVIDUALLY OR IN SMALL GROUPS OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. FORENSIC EXPERTS ARE ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY THE VICTIMS' IDENTITIES THROUGH DNA ANALYSIS. POLOFF AND DOJ REPRESENTATIVES WILL TRAVEL TO NEIVA ON JANUARY 16 TO MEET WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS UNIT'S LEAD INVESTIGATOR IN THE CASE. PROSECUTORS EXPECT TO CONTINUE THEIR ON-SITE INVESTIGATION WHEN THE AREA IS FULLY SECURED. POST WILL ATTEMPT TO VISIT THE SITE AS SOON AS SECURITY CONDITIONS PERMIT.

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